



## SAMPLE MATERIAL

### Principal's Message to Parents About Effort

Madison Elementary School, Washington

**Topic:** National Math Panel: Critical Foundations for Algebra

**Practice:** Comprehensive Instruction

Brent Perdue, Madison Elementary School's principal, sends a weekly newsletter to parents, *The Monday Messenger*. He prepared a series of feature articles for *The Monday Messenger* that address issues related to effort and persistence, including negative attitudes about learning mathematics, the influence of adult modeling on attitudes, the importance of effort and struggle in learning complex skills, and assisting and supporting children without simply providing answers. Three issues of *The Monday Messenger* are included as examples.

# Madison's Monday Messenger



December 13, 2004

## Principal's Message

*After beginning to report on attitudes toward mathematics in last week's edition, I wanted to expand on its notion and offer some of the research. The selected passage below comes to you from EDThoughts: What We Know About Mathematics Teaching and Learning (2002). Take a moment to read the passage, and consider challenging some of your own perceptions of mathematics and how we learn.*

*Negative attitudes about mathematics are learned, not inherited. A student with a productive attitude finds sense in mathematics, perceives it as both useful and worthwhile, believes that steady effort in learning mathematics pays off, and views him or herself as an effective learner and doer of mathematics. Generally, U.S. students are more likely to attribute success in mathematics problem solving to ability rather than effort. East Asian children, on the other hand, perceive success as a function of effort, not ability. It is important for all adults to model perseverance in the face of challenging problems, and to convey that mistakes and misconceptions are inevitable and provide necessary opportunities for learning. In addition, both students and adults must believe that all students are endowed with the capabilities to learn mathematics.*

*I ask that you consider these findings and that we all look at our attitudes with new eyes. Learning and understanding comes from grappling with new and challenging problems that help our minds grow and our confidence blossom. And as Albert Einstein once said, "Don't fret over your troubles in math, I assure you mine are even greater." He knew that to achieve greatness, all things cannot be easy.*

*Let us grapple together,*

Brent A. Perdue, Principal

## Read The Messenger Together

You are encouraged to read the Messenger each Monday as a family. Many of the items included in the Messenger are intended for eyes, young and old. And often, a lively discussion may erupt! Try it, your kids will benefit if you do.



## Winter Food Drive



This is the last week of Madison's food drive. As a reminder, the class with the most donated food will receive an ice cream party for all their efforts. As of last Wednesday, Mrs. Kelly's class was in the lead with 158 donated items. Mr. Abel and Mrs. Howe were right on Mrs. Kelly's heels with 155 and 148 items respectively. Thanks to all of you have donated to this worthy cause!

## Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Madison would like to welcome Dena McAtee as its new representative on this important district committee. Dena is excited about the opportunity to represent Madison's interests and will be working with the school and PTO to keep you informed of the goings on of CAC. Thanks Dena!

## PTO

The PTO will be meeting at 7:00 Tuesday night (12/14) in the library.

## Parent/Teacher Conference Participation

Studies show that involved parents who are active in their children's lives have students who do better in school and who excel in life. Madison is excited to report that out of 310 students in classrooms K-6, 300 had parents or guardians who attended a parent/teacher conference. That is an attendance rate of 97%. Way to go families!

# Madison's Monday Messenger



OCTOBER 30, 2006

## Principal's Message:

We all want to help our children succeed academically. Our notion of a caring adult is one who will lend a helping hand when a child struggles or doesn't understand. This should always be the case.

What we might consider adjusting, however, is what our interventions look like, and how quickly we intervene. A child learns early on, whether a simple "I don't get it" will bring about all the adult assistance needed to help him/her get an answer with less effort.

Letting children grapple with concepts that tax the brain, improves the depth of learning and builds stamina for trying different approaches. None of us want kids who give up at the first sign of difficulty.

There does exist a fine line between grappling with concepts and frustrations that lead to a child shutting down. I encourage all of us to work to ensure students are given the opportunity to work through difficulties with the smallest amount of support needed.

Brent A. Perdue

Principal [brentp@spokaneschools.org](mailto:brentp@spokaneschools.org)



## On the Calendar:

### OCTOBER:

Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> 1:30 Halloween Parade

### NOVEMBER:

Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> School Banking Day

Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> Election Day

Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> Veteran's Day Observed  
(NO SCHOOL)

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PTO Meeting

Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> Conference Week Begins



## HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS.....

Tuesday, October 31, classes will be celebrating Halloween in a variety of different ways. All classrooms will participate in the traditional costume parade. The parade will begin at 1:30 pm and will be followed by celebrations in the classrooms. Teachers have been working with parent volunteers on planning classroom activities and treats.

### The following are some guidelines about costumes:

☼ Costumes need to be appropriate for school. They should not depict violent or gory characters. Favorite storybook characters, animals or sport/career outfits are fine.

☼ Due to state and district policy concerning no weapons or look alikes on school property, children may **NOT** bring toy weapons, guns, or knives as part of their costumes.

☼ Grades 1 through 6 Children should **NOT** wear costumes, masks, or make-up to school. They will have an opportunity to change into their costumes prior to the parade.

☼ **AM and PM Kindergarten students may wear their costumes to school.**

We appreciate your support of appropriate costumes for a fun, yet safe afternoon. If you are in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular costume it is always better to check with your child's teacher ahead of time to avoid disappointment on the day of the parade.

# Madison's Monday Messenger



DECEMBER 11, 2006

## **On the Calendar:**

### **DECEMBER:**

Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PTO Meeting  
Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> Winter Break begins  
Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> First Day of Winter

### **JANUARY:**

Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> Return to School  
Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PTO Meeting  
Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> Martin Luther King Jr.  
Holiday – NO SCHOOL  
Jan. 29<sup>th</sup> Semester Break Day  
– NO SCHOOL

## **Link mathematics with daily life**

Every day people face situations that involve mathematics such as deciding whether one has enough money to purchase a list of items at the store, reading a map to find out where one is, building a budget, deciding on the shortest route to a destination, developing a schedule, or determining the price of an item on sale. Help your child realize that mathematics is a significant part of every day life. Suggestions for discussing mathematics with your elementary, middle, or high school child during every day activities are listed at the end of this section.

## **Principal's Message:**

*Below is an excerpt from A Family's Guide: Fostering Your Child's Success in School Mathematics written by The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. I hope you enjoy it.*

### **Be Positive**

*If you have a negative attitude about mathematics, chances are your child will too. Help your child have a "can do" attitude by praising your child's efforts as well as her accomplishments. Acknowledge the facts that mathematics can be challenging at times and that persistence and hard work are the keys to success. Relate mathematics learning to other endeavors that require hard work and persistence, such as playing a sport. Struggling at times in mathematics is normal and is actually necessary to, and valuable in, understanding mathematics.*

## **Make mathematics fun**

*Play board games, solve puzzles, and ponder brain teasers with your child. Your child enjoys these kinds of activities while enhancing his mathematical thinking. Point out the mathematics involved and have your child discuss the strategies he used.*

## **Learn about mathematics related careers**

*Mathematics is foundational to a wide variety of interesting careers. Research different careers with your child and find out what she should be doing now to prepare for these options. Help your child understand that the school courses she takes now and the grades she earns will affect her future. One source of information on the many career possibilities that involve mathematics is Career Ideas for Kids Who Like Math, by Diane Lindsey Reeves.*

*Make it a mathematics kind of day!*

*Brent A. Perdue*

*Principal [brentp@spokaneschools.org](mailto:brentp@spokaneschools.org)*

